

DC

UNIVERSE

2

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6-ISSUE
MINI-
SERIES

THE BATMAN

WHO LAUGHS

BEHOLD...

THE
GRIM
KNIGHT!

SNYDER
JOCK
BARON

WONDER COMICS

**WONDER TWIN POWERS,
ACTIVATE!**

**WONDER
TWINS**

Written by **MARK RUSSELL**
Art by **STEPHEN BYRNE**

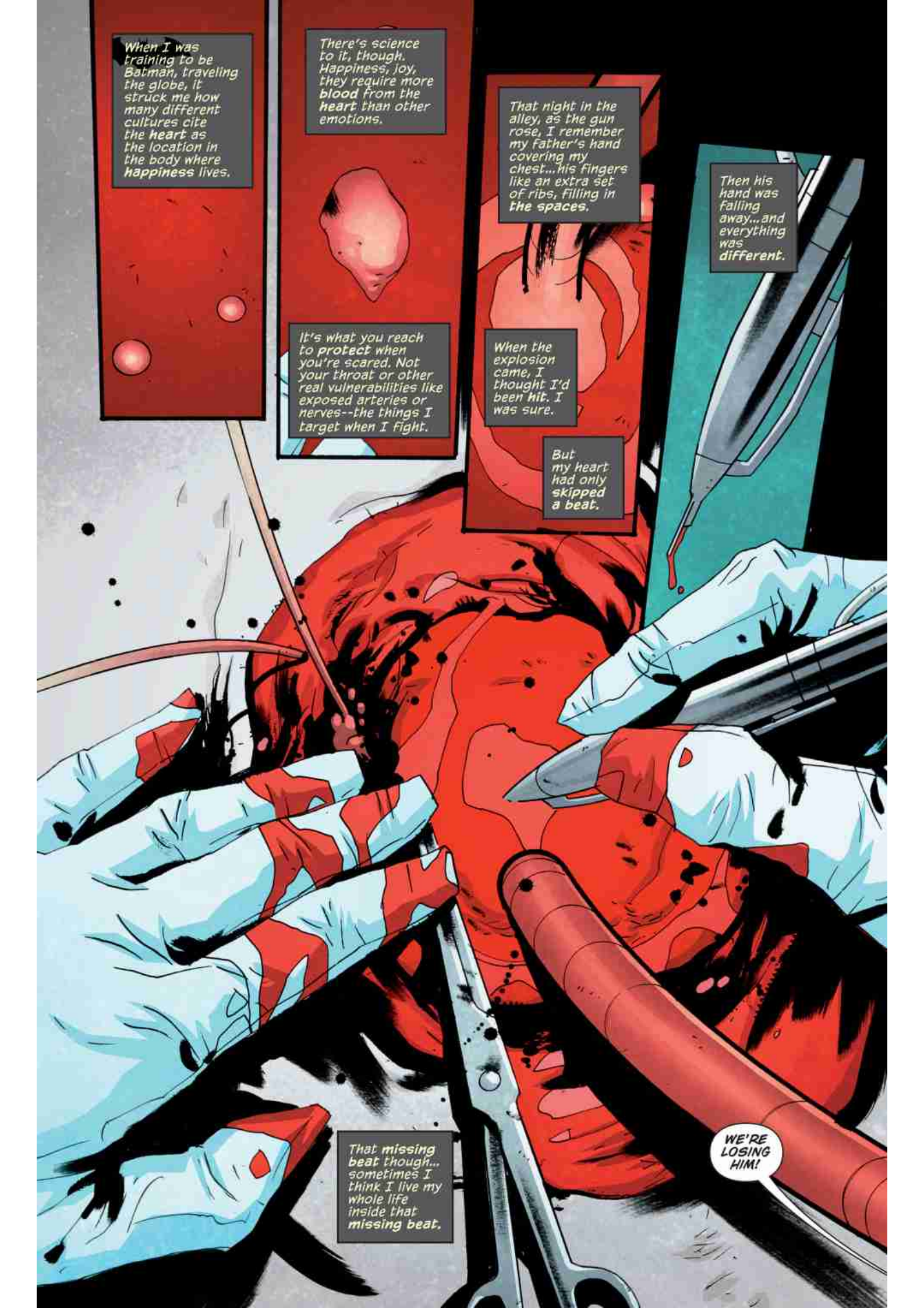
MONTHLY BEGINNING
FEBRUARY





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THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS 2 SNYDER • JOCK • BARON



When I was training to be Batman, traveling the globe, it struck me how many different cultures cite the heart as the location in the body where happiness lives.

There's science to it, though. Happiness, joy, they require more blood from the heart than other emotions.

That night in the alley, as the gun rose, I remember my father's hand covering my chest...his fingers like an extra set of ribs, filling in the spaces.

Then his hand was falling away...and everything was different.

It's what you reach to protect when you're scared. Not your throat or other real vulnerabilities like exposed arteries or nerves--the things I target when I fight.

When the explosion came, I thought I'd been hit. I was sure.

But my heart had only skipped a beat.

That missing beat though...sometimes I think I live my whole life inside that missing beat.

WE'RE LOSING HIM!



SIR, HE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT.

HE IS.

THE WHOLE CAVITY IS BLOOD, DAMMIT, NOTHING BUT **BLOOD!** EVEN IF HE INCURRED THIS WOUND **INSIDE AN OPERATING ROOM**, HE'D STILL LIKELY **DIE.**

THIS IS AN OPERATING ROOM. SUCTION, ALFRED.

THERE IS NO WAY--

ALFRED. THE **SUCTION**. YOU'RE LETTING IT **SLIP.**

...FINE.

IF I MIGHT ASK, THOUGH, AT A MOMENT LIKE THIS, WHEN SOMETHING AS AWFUL AS THAT **LAUGHING DEMON** HAS COME TO THIS CITY--

DON'T.



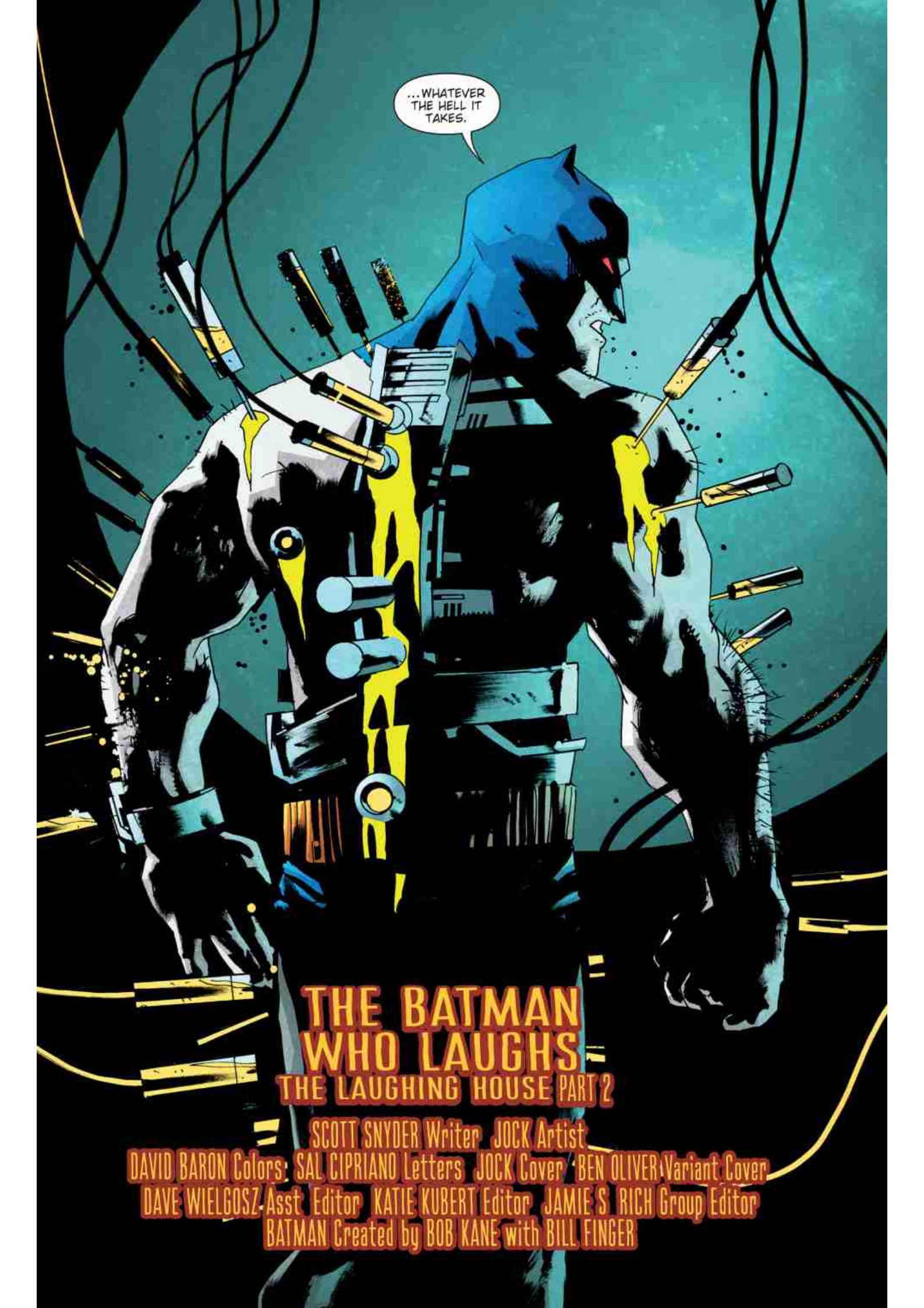
YOU WOULDN'T BE KILLING HIM, BRUCE. THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT. I HAVE HIM SO DRUGGED THAT EVEN IF HE WAKES, HE CAN'T SEE, CAN'T MOVE...

ALFRED.

AT THE VERY LEAST, IF HIS HEART STOPS FOR A FEW MINUTES...IF HIS BRAIN IS DEPRIVED OF OXYGEN...WE COULD KEEP HIM ALIVE. HE WOULDN'T BE **DEAD!**

I KNOW HOW BADLY YOU WANT THIS MAN GONE. BUT YOU WILL NOT LET HIM DIE.

TO BE FRANK, RIGHT NOW WE HAVE A BIGGER DAMN PROBLEM THAN JOKER, AND THE ONLY WAY WE BEAT THIS MONSTER... IS BY STAYING TRUE TO WHO WE **ARE...**

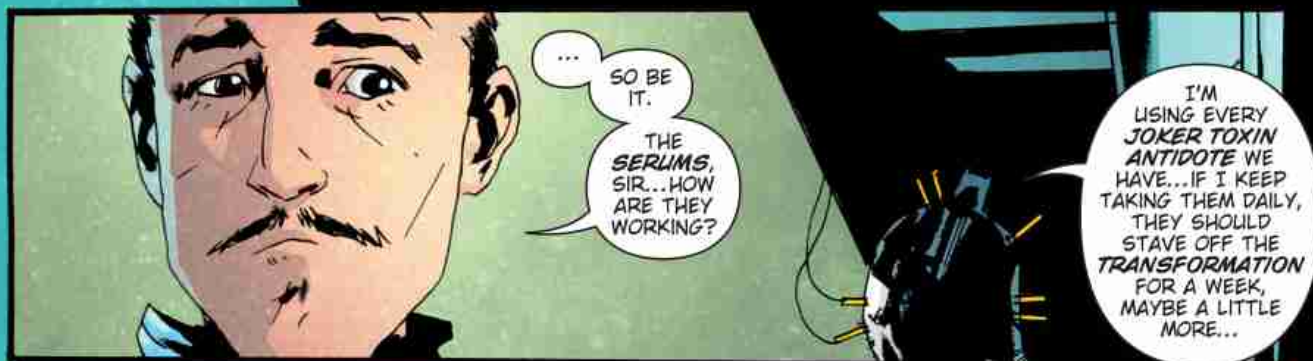


...WHATEVER
THE HELL IT
TAKES.

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS

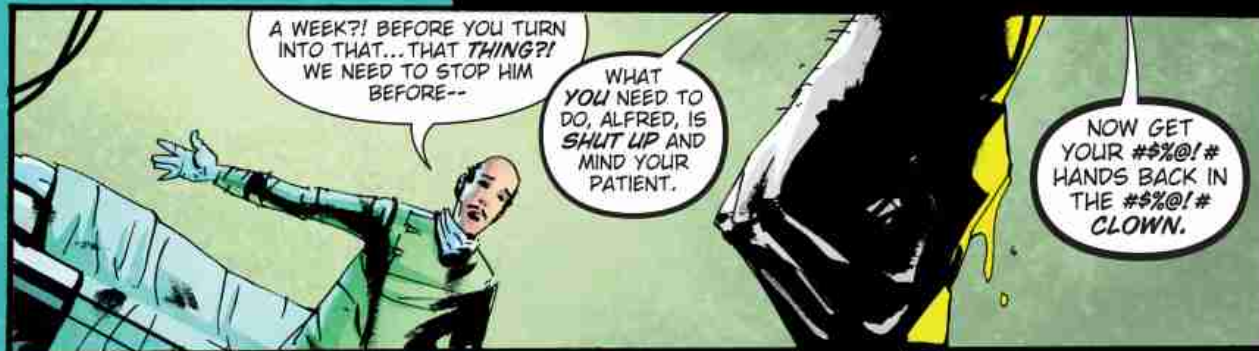
THE LAUGHING HOUSE PART 2

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...
SO BE
IT.
THE
SERUMS,
SIR...HOW
ARE THEY
WORKING?

I'M
USING EVERY
JOKER TOXIN
ANTIDOTE WE
HAVE...IF I KEEP
TAKING THEM DAILY,
THEY SHOULD
STAVE OFF THE
TRANSFORMATION
FOR A WEEK,
MAYBE A LITTLE
MORE...



A WEEK?! BEFORE YOU TURN
INTO THAT...THAT *THING*?!
WE NEED TO STOP HIM
BEFORE--

WHAT
YOU NEED TO
DO, ALFRED, IS
SHUT UP AND
MIND YOUR
PATIENT.

NOW GET
YOUR #\$\$@!#
HANDS BACK IN
THE #\$\$@!#
CLOWN.



...
LOOK,
I--I'M SORRY...I
JUST...THAT THING
OUT THERE. SEEING
MYSELF LIKE THAT. HE
FEELS LIKE THE LAST
ONE. THE ONE AT
THE END.

SIR--

HE KNOWS
EVERYTHING I KNOW.
HE'S GONE THROUGH
EVERYTHING I HAVE
AND THERE'S NOTHING
HE WON'T DO TO **WIN**.
HE...WINS, ALFRED. HE
HAS NO WEAKNESS
I CAN DISCERN.
ME...

...THERE
HAS TO BE A
WAY TO BEAT
HIM! A WAY I
CAN BEAT
HI--



HEEHEEEHEEE!



JOKER?



IT'S JUST A
PHYSICAL RESPONSE.
MOST PEOPLE GASP.
I SUPPOSE IT MEANS
HE'LL LIVE.

AND...IF
WE'RE SAYING WHO
WE ARE...YOUR SOFT
SPOTS, THE THINGS
YOU'RE WORRIED
MAKE YOU
WEAK...?

"...THEY'RE WHAT
MAKE YOU **STRONG**."

"THE **BRUCE WAYNE**
I KNOW AND LOVE."

WE'LL BE
BACK AFTER
THIS SHORT
BREAK.

"ARE YOU
COVERED? REALLY
COVERED? AT
GOTHAM PRIORITY,
WE LIVE HERE,
TOO."

"SO WE OFFER
ALL SORTS OF
POLICIES FOR OUR
FELLOW
GOTHAMITES,
EVEN--"



LATER.

VICTIM
IS NONE OTHER
THAN **BRUCE**
WAYNE.

AGAIN.





CAUSE OF DEATH WAS THE FALL.



THE THING IS, HE SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN FROM A HEIGHT THAT'S **NOT POSSIBLE** GIVEN THE STATURE OF THE SURROUNDING BUILDINGS.

HEY. WELCOME TO TUESDAY IN GOTHAM CITY.

THESE BRUCE WAYNES...THE LAST ONE--THE ONE FOUND IN THE ROWHOUSE--**DISINTEGRATED** IN THE MORGUE.

IT WAS MADE OF SOME KIND OF UNSTABLE CELL STRUCTURE--SOMETHING LIKE DARK MATTER? THIS ONE LIKELY IS, TOO. WHAT THE HELL IS **GOING ON**?

MAYBE THEY'RE FROM SOME OTHER DIMENSION. LIKE IF THIS **BATMAN WHO LAUGHS** IS PULLING BRUCE WAYNES THROUGH FROM OTHER WORLDS...



...MAYBE THEY APPEAR HERE AT THE SPOT THEY WERE AT IN **THEIR** WORLD. WHAT IF **THIS** WAYNE WAS HIGH UP?

WHY BRUCE WAYNE IS SO SPECIAL THOUGH... HEY, WHO KNOWS...



PSST--

--YOU KNOW, NO ONE BUT **ME** KNOWS THAT HARVEY IS **OFF** THIS WEEK, GETTING TREATMENT FOR A **HERNIA**. EVERYONE THINKS HE'S ON TRAFFIC FOR PUNISHMENT (HE'D RATHER THAN **HERNIA** RUMORS).

THAT SAID, YOU'RE USUALLY BETTER AT THIS **DISGUISE** THING. ARE YOU OKAY, **BATMAN**? YOU SEEM...**OFF**.

I'M...FINE, JIM. I'LL BE FINE. PLEASE, LET'S JUST GET BACK TO IT.





SO WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE VICTIM?

EACH OF THESE BRUCE WAYNES LIVED A DIFFERENT LIFE. THE LAST ONE WAS MARRIED, HAD CHILDREN. THIS ONE...



...WAS MAYOR.

FROM THE PICTURES IN HIS WALLET, HE LOOKS LIKE HE WAS **HAPPY**. SEEMS TO HAVE RETIRED FROM BEING B...

...BEING A **PLAYBOY** AROUND THE TIME HIS WARD, **JASON TODD** DIED. HE HAS A SPEECH IN HIS POCKET. APPARENTLY, HE WAS CELEBRATING THE SIGNING OF A FEDERAL ENERGY CONTRACT HERE IN GOTHAM CITY. HAVING A **GOOD MOMENT**. MY GUESS, HE WAS CELEBRATING ON A **BLIMP** WHEN HE... CAME THROUGH.

SO THE QUESTION IS, WHY IS THIS MONSTER PULLING BRUCE WAYNES FROM **OTHER WORLDS**? WHAT'S HE TRYING TO **GET**?



WHATEVER IT IS, HE ALREADY GOT IT. HE BEAT US HERE. SEE THAT WOUND? IT'S A BLOOD OR TISSUE SAMPLE **PUNCTURE**.

HE COULD HAVE TAKEN ONE FROM THE LAST BODY AS WELL.

HH...

WHAT?

CARDIAC BLOOD HAS SOME OF THE LAST OF THE BODY'S CELLS TO DIE, THE MOST **RESILIENT**. HE'S USING THE CELLS TO MAKE SOMETHING... A **SERUM**.

WHAT KIND OF SERUM?

HE'S FROM A REALM OF DARK MATTER, WHERE EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE TO OUR HOPES AND FEARS. IT'S POSSIBLE HE COULD BE CREATING SOMETHING THAT **INFECTS** OUR CELLS WITH **DARK MATTER**, CHANGING US INTO...

NIGHTMARES LIKE HIM?

NIGHTMARES LIKE **US**. OUR **DARKEST VISION** OF OURSELVES. **PREDATORS**.



LORD.

BATMAN,
LISTEN...THERE'S
SOMETHING I SHOULD
TELL YOU. SOMEONE
WHO MIGHT BE ABLE
TO HELP, BUT...I...
I'M NOT SURE--

WAIT,
HARV?

HARV, IT *IS* YOU.
WE ALL THOUGHT YOU
WERE ON BRIDGE AND TUNNEL
DUTY! LISTEN, THE GUYS ARE
STARTING A *POOL* BASED ON
WHAT YOU WERE SAYING
THE OTHER NIGHT.

THREE
BUCKETS.

BUCKET ONE,
THIS *GRIM KNIGHT*
TAKES DOWN THE
BAT.

BUCKET TWO,
THE *LAUGHING*
ONE TAKES DOWN
THE BAT. BUCKET
THREE--

WE WERE
DISCUSSING A
@##%@!# *CASE*,
CADET, BUT BY ALL
MEANS, WHAT'S
BUCKET
THREE?!

HARV...I
MEAN, DETECTIVE
BULLOCK, I DIDN'T
MEAN TO--

WHAT
WAS BUCKET
THREE?! PUT
ME DOWN FOR
IT, EH?!



I'M...I'M SORRY, COMMISSIONER...JUST YESTERDAY, THOUGH, HE WAS SAYING HOW WE SHOULD HAVE A *POOL*, HOW THE BAT COULD REALLY GO DOWN THIS TIME...

THAT HE'S GETTING OLDER, THE CITY IS CHANGING AND--

IT'S FINE. GO BACK TO YOUR POST, CADET.



LOOK, I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT. HARVEY BELITTLES YOU TO MAKE THE MEN FEEL MORE IMPORTANT SOMETIMES.

BUT HE'S IN YOUR CORNER, MAYBE MORE THAN ANYONE BUT ME. HAS BEEN SINCE DAY ONE. HE'S JUST...*HIM*.

BUT YOU... WHAT *WAS* THAT BACK THERE? IF SOMETHING IS GOING ON WITH YOU, I'M HERE, BATMAN. I KNOW THIS *THING*...HE'S A TOUGH ONE, BUT IF WE DO IT TOGETHER, HELL, IT'S LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE--HE'S JUST *TUESDAY* IN GOTHAM.



NO ONE THINKS--

IT DOESN'T MATTER. COME HERE. I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

SURE, AS LONG IT'S NOT ANOTHER DEAD GUY NAMED WAYNE.

IT'S AN OLD MAP OF GOTHAM.

WAYNE TOWER.

"THERE'S ONE HANGING IN WAYNE TOWER, TOO."

"WHEN GOTHAM WAS BUILT, THE FOUNDING FAMILIES SAW IT AS THE ENGINE OF THE COUNTRY. THE CULTURAL, INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL CENTER OF THE NATION."

"IN 1780, THOUGH, PLAGUE WIPED OUT A THIRD OF THE CITY. AND THE FAMILIES, THEY FEARED THAT WHAT THEY SAW AS THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY COULD BECOME THE MEANS OF ITS INFECTION."

"THEY VOWED NEVER TO LET GOTHAM BECOME THE SOURCE OF DARKNESS."

THEY SET UP A SYSTEM CALLED **LAST LAUGH**, BASED ON THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION.

A DEFENSE SYSTEM BY WHICH GOTHAM WOULD BE PROTECTED IF ANYTHING TERRIBLE SPREAD INSIDE.

WHAT KIND OF SYSTEM?

A MEANS OF BLOWING THE ENTRYWAYS AND **VACCINATING** THE CITY WITH AIRSHIPS, RESERVOIRS OF FOOD AND WATER HIDDEN DEEP BELOW THE STREETS. I LEARNED ABOUT IT FIGHTING THE **OWLS**.

IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A BAD IDEA TO ME.

WELL, AFTER THE **LAST JOKER** ATTACK, I STARTED BUILDING MY **OWN LAST LAUGH**.

"IT'S A FINAL DEFENSE AGAINST ANY CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL ATTACK. A WAY OF **SEALING OFF** THE CITY, PURIFYING AIR AND WATER, RESTORING GOTHAM'S HEALTH INDEPENDENTLY."

"THE CENTRAL HUB IS IN **WAYNE TOWER**, ON THE HIGHEST SECURITY FLOOR. MULTI-POINT DNA ACCESS REQUIRED..."

"LET ME GUESS, THE ONLY PEOPLE WITH ACCESS ARE YOU...AND **BRUCE WAYNE**."

HELLO? HELLO, WHO'S THERE? THE OTHER GUARDS SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, NO ONE IS ALLOWED HERE EXCEPT--

I ALREADY SAID HELLO TO THE OTHER GUARDS, BILL. GOOD TO SEE YOU!

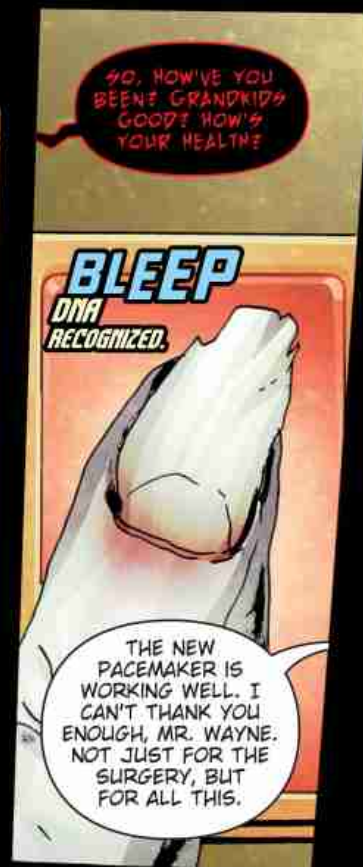
AND GOOD TO HEAR YOU, MR. WAYNE.



GOING UP?



HA.
ALWAYS.
BILL.
ALWAYS.



SO, HOW'D YOU
BEENE GRANDKIDS
GOOD? HOW'S
YOUR HEALTNE?

BLEEP
DNA
RECOGNIZED.

THE NEW
PACEMAKER IS
WORKING WELL. I
CAN'T THANK YOU
ENOUGH, MR. WAYNE.
NOT JUST FOR THE
SURGERY, BUT
FOR ALL THIS.



OH, COME ON.
YOU WERE A PUBLIC
SERVANT INJURED IN
AN ATTACK BY
SCARECROW, BILL.

STILL,
GIVING ME THIS
JOB, PAYING
FOR MY
RECOVERY...



IT'S
THE LEAST I
COULD DO.

**CHING
CHING**

NO, IT'S
NOT.

I'M JUST
SAYING...







STOP IT!



SO YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.



My god, he's quick. He's leaner than me, faster.

But I'm stronger.

I attack with a combination of styles that favors power... Five methods just in my lunge...

...and yet, in his dodge,
he uses aspects of six...

...he sees it
all coming...

...but I saw this
coming, too.

Since my last fight
with him, I've been
training again.

Training in a
technique he
won't know.

Because
I made
it up.

ENOUGH!

Alfred calls the style "Bam
Pow." It stands for something
clever, but mostly, I think he
just likes saying "Bam Pow."

Especially when he
thinks of this monster.



THIS...
=HUFF HUFF=
THIS IS WHERE
YOUR PLAN
ENDS.



COME ON, MAYBE
ALL OF THIS, EVERY PART,
IS MY PLAN, EVEN LYING
HERE, OUT OF THE LINE
OF FIRE...

NOW.



BLAM



UNHHHH...

DON'T TRY
TO GET UP. THE
BULLET LODGED IN
YOUR INTERCOSTAL
HAS A SAT-TAGER
IN IT.

"THE GRIM KNIGHT, EVEN HIS BULLETS SHOOT BULLETS."

"THE DEADLIEST MAN ALIVE. HE'S US IF JOE CHILL DROPPED THE GUN IN THE ALLEY AND WE PICKED IT UP."

"IT'S NOT JUST THE GUNS, THOUGH. NO, ON HIS WORLD HE HAS WAYNE ENTERPRISES WEAPONIZED. CHIPS IN YOUR GPS. VALVES IN YOUR WATER FILTRATION."

"YOUR MINIVAN DRIVES OFF A BRIDGE, YOU NEVER KNOW WHO KILLED YOU."



HE'S US AT TOTAL WAR. I'VE BEEN SAVING HIM.

YOU WON'T WIN. I'LL KILL YOU IF I HAVE TO.

KILL ME... BECAUSE I'M YOU IT DOESN'T COUNT. THE FREE PASS? HEN.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU ALREADY KNOW. I'M DISMANTLING "LAST LAUGH" BY MEANS OF A SPECIAL PROTOCOL, BRUCE. ONE I HAD ON MY WORLD. TOO. A FAIL-SAFE TO TAKE DOWN ANY RECORDS KEPT HERE IF BATMAN FINALLY ENDED.



NO...NO, DON'T DO THIS!

A WAY OF DEMOLISHING THE BUILDING SAFELY, A CONTROLLED IMPLSION. OF COURSE, IT'S DESIGNED TO WORK ONLY WHEN NO ONE IS INSIDE THE BUILDING. THERE ARE DOZENS OF PROTOCOLS...

...ALL OF WHICH THE GRIM KNIGHT DISMANTLED A FEW DAYS AGO.



PLEASE... PLEASE DON'T.



IT HURTS. I KNOW. JUST LIKE THE NIGHT THEY DIED. OH, I REMEMBER, TOO.

OUR FATHER'S HAND, RIGHT HERE.



FINAL PROTOCOL ACTIVATED. AWAITING CONFIRMATION.

ABORT! ABORT PROTOCOL!

THE TAGER DISRUPTS SOUND WAVES, TOO. THE PROTOCOL CAN'T HEAR YOU.

SEE, ALL THESE VERSIONS OF US I'M BRINGING HERE TO USE... THEY'RE HAPPIER THAN YOU, BRUCE. THEY'RE AT PEACE, BECAUSE THEY EFFECT CHANGE.

WORSE THAN THAT, YOU'RE AN OLD MAN'S HAND OVER A CHILD'S HEART. WEAK, SOFT, PROTECTING NOTHING.

OUT OF EVERY VERSION OF US ACROSS THE UNIVERSE, YOU'RE THE MOST MISERABLE, THE LEAST ACCOMPLISHED. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YET, BUT YOU WILL. SEE, TO ME, TO US, YOU'RE THE NIGHTMARE BATMAN. THE BAD JOKE.



DON'T... DON'T DO THIS!



WE... I'M THE GUN.



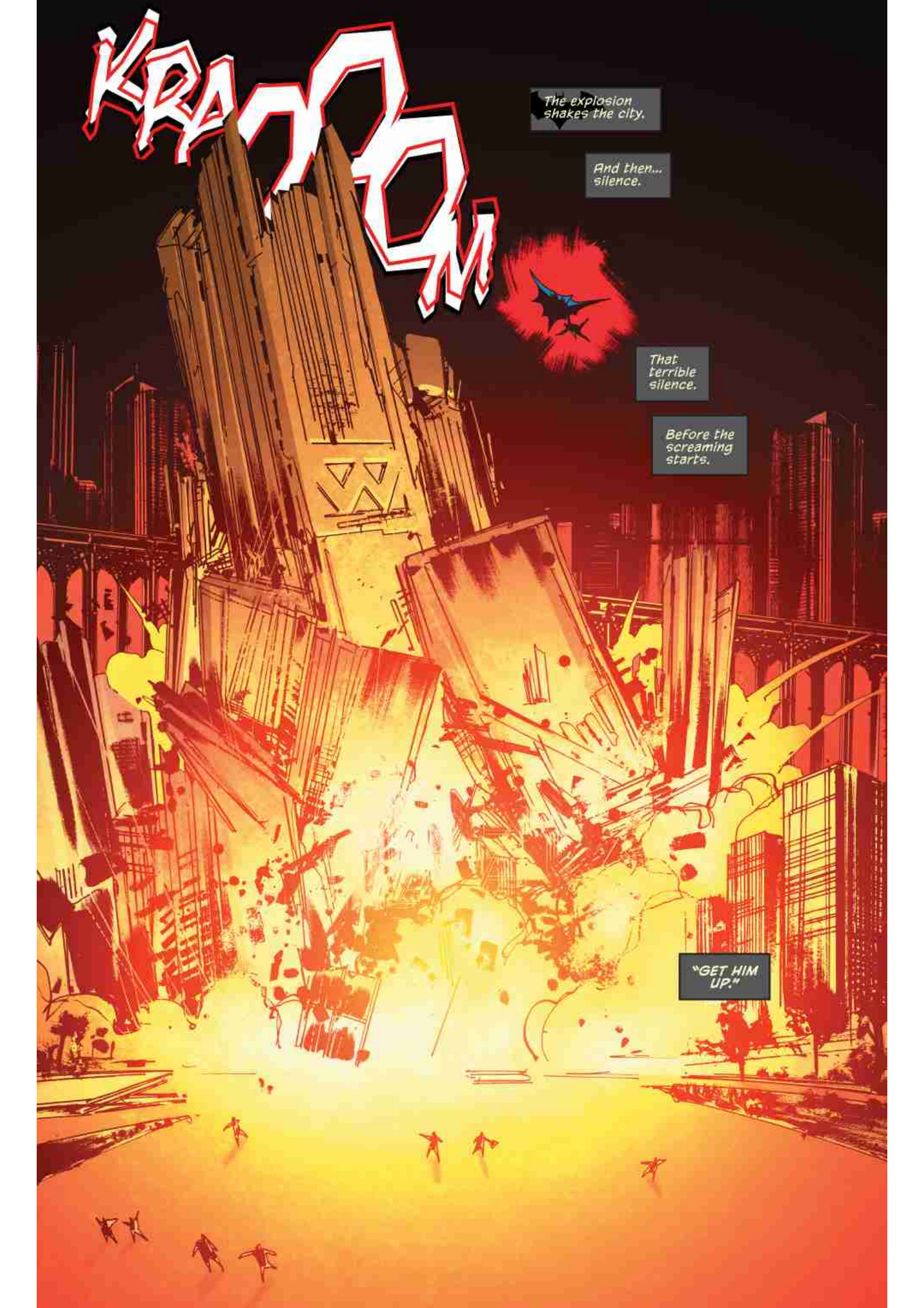
CAVE-IN INITIATING.



NO!



KRAOOON



The explosion
shakes the city.

And then...
silence.

That
terrible
silence.

Before the
screaming
starts.

"GET HIM
UP."



GET HIM
UP NOW!



HE'S
RECOVERING,
SIR. STILL
DRUGGED
TO--



**WAKE UP!
NOW!**

SIR--

I SAID WAKE
UP! WHAT'S HE
PLANNING?!



he...

HE
WHAT?!



HE WHAT?!
WHAT IS HE
GOING TO DO?
TELL ME!

heeeheeeheee!



YOU THINK
THIS IS FUNNY?!
I'LL SHOW YOU
FUNNY!

IT'S HOW HE
BREATHES, SIR! HE'S
NOT LAUGHING! HE'S
NOT HERE, HE'S--



I'm
here.



YOU
KNOW HIS
PLAN. WHAT IS
HIS PLAN?! I
NEED TO
KNOW...



hee...heee...
I don't know
it. Only one
person does...





...YOU'RE
MY SON,
JAMES.

AND YOU
MAY BE THE
ONLY ONE WHO
CAN HELP US
STOP HIM.

NEXT:
BLACK
MIRRORS

WONDER COMICS

ANSWER THE CALL!

DIAL
FOR
HERO

Written
by

SAM HUMPHRIES

Art
by

JOE QUINONES

MONTHLY BEGINNING
MARCH



WONDER COMICS

NAOMI

How did you get involved with the Wonder Comics project?

Brian and I have been friends for many years.

We teach together and have often talked about collaborating. When he went over to DC, he felt it would be a great time to finally do something creative together, and NAOMI grew out of that.

What are you most excited about?

Working with Brian has been great, so there's certainly that. But one of the things that has me really excited is the fact that this is the one Wonder Comics title that isn't springing from something else. This is a completely new character within the DC Universe, and even her backstory is additive. Bringing something so new to comics is really exciting.

Are you approaching this differently than your previous work?

I've co-written a few titles before, but this is my first time co-writing with Brian. When we teach together, we work well together—like a pair of old vaudeville comedians. We're still finding our groove when it comes to writing together, but so far it's working out well.

Describe this book in seven words (or fewer).

Teen girl investigates her mysterious past.

What does a first-time reader need to know before picking up this title?

NAOMI is a new character and a new title, and with that in mind, Brian and I have really worked hard to create a story that is easy to access for both first-time readers, and seasoned fans as well.



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The Last Kryptonian-DCP

